

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Robert Vaughan
The Three Stooges

Shoebox (Larry)

We go on like this for days until we have a shoebox of memories. Okay, a shoebox of aches, like we'd graduated with the highest temperatures in our class. Easier to cremate the remains. *Cremation*, she calls it. When it's overflowing we carry the shoebox to Chinatown. Along the way she says, "Every time you think, you weaken the nation." So I stay quiet. We sell it to Jin Lee for a song and a dance. He chooses God Bless America while doing a jig. I laugh while she bobs around. Jin Lee asks me, "Were you born in this country? And I say, "No, Milwaukee."

Steps (Moe)

"Paranoid? Of course not!"

I knew he was lying. He was suspicious of everything, Newt Gingrich, the war in Iraq, the neighbor who shat on his back steps last Thanksgiving.

"C'mon, what's a matter with ya'? It was a dog," I said. "Or a fox. Ya' nuts?"

"Fox don't come onto porches let alone shit on them."

"How do you know?" I mean, really. And why would Pete Parkinson take a dump on the top of his prized patio steps? I gave his nose a good tweak.

"Ow! What's that for? I didn't do nothin'!"

"That's in case you do and I'm not around."

Sidebar (Curly)

Around the time I was just crazy about Spanish food...especially corned beef and cabbage. I thought most everyone should play bocce. One time we played at camp and I was hooked. My parents bought a set. This was before my father died dancing, on the end of a rope. I trained the neighborhood kids, some parents, too. Then I started them tournaments. People paid to enter, and winners took all. The local paper ran a story about my enterprise and soon other tourneys cropped up around town. My grades tanked. We're not ordinary people, we're morons. Neighbors threatened to sue. I thought I'd rather be dead, but there's no future in it! They'd sneer, "Nyuk, Nyuk, Nyuk" in my face. Finally, mom sold the bocce set. It was all gone except the smaller ball. I hid that in the cherry tree.